

Teamwork keeps armament flight running smoothly

By SSgt. Steve Ball
Public affairs

The last thing on an aircrew's mind when they're approaching a target should be "is this bomb going to release when I drop it or is this missile going to launch correctly." The people making sure the equipment is ready for action are assigned to the 48th Equipment Maintenance Squadron armament systems flight.

The flight maintains all equip-

ment on the aircraft that releases, launches or fires weapons.

"Just as with any job, teamwork is essential to our mission," said MSgt. Randy Young, armament systems flight chief. "And in July, we reorganized the flight, hoping to foster a better sense of teamwork. So far, the results have been very successful."

Before the reorganization the flight was set up into three combat armament system teams. Each CAST, which had about 15 people, was assigned to a fighter squadron and was responsible for all that squadron's armament systems maintenance.

"We were constantly having problems with groups of four or five people leaving at one time from the same CAST," said Young. "That meant that squadrons lost one-third of their armament systems maintenance capabilities. Although people from other CASTs would pitch in and help when asked, we weren't fully integrated as a team."

The new system combines the three CASTs into one. It is broken down into almost a dozen crews. Each crew consists of three people led by an NCO or experienced airman.

"Although we've broken down into many different crews,

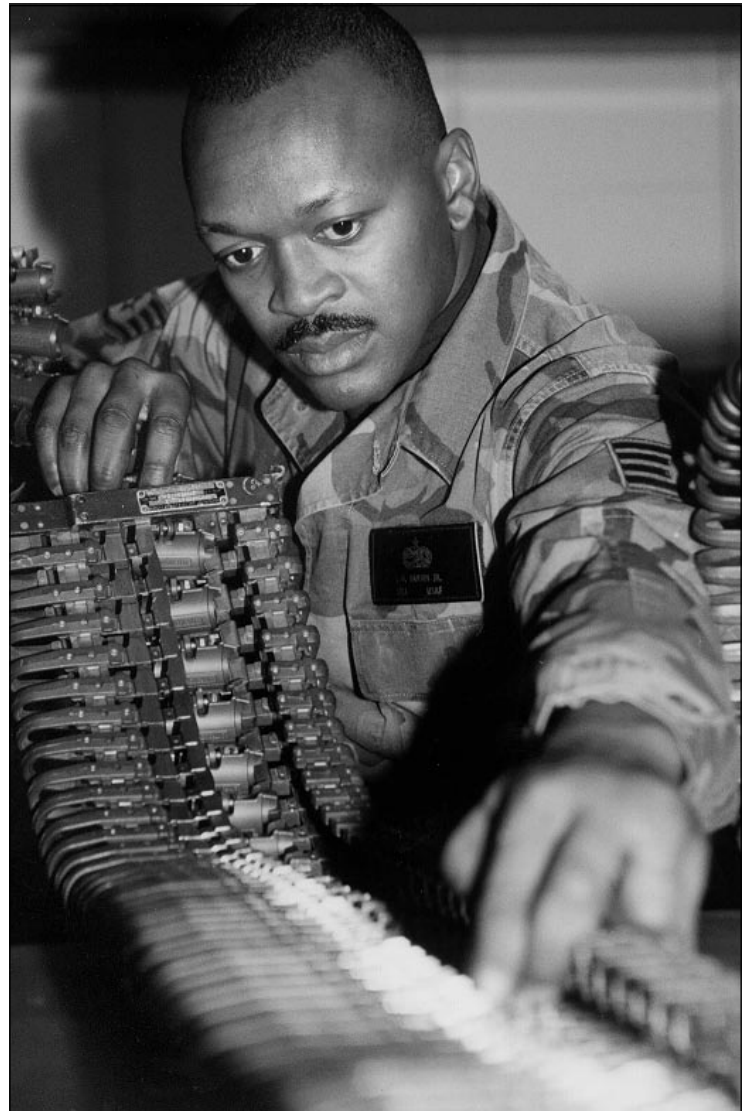


Photo by SSgt. Steve Ball

SSgt. Johnell Marvin Jr., armament systems flight production supervisor, inspects an ammunition chute used to load ammunition on a jet.



An armament systems team member inspects an ammunition loading mechanism.



TSgt. Virgil Lidell, armament systems flight production supervisor, inspects an aircraft pylon.

we now operate as one cohesive team," said Young. "That's the new system's biggest asset."

Another thing the change did was put the people with the experience, the mid-level NCOs, back on the shop floor.

"At first I didn't like the crew system," said SSgt. Drew Page, armament systems flight weapons crew chief. "I had just finished 'paying my dues' and had a role in management. The new system put me back on the shop doing hands-on maintenance."

"Now, I wouldn't want to go back to the three-CAST system. I work directly with the airmen I supervise and am much more involved in their day-to-day training."

The new system also provided numerous other benefits, according to Young.

"It is much easier for us to meet our TDY schedules and training requirements," said Young. "It also allows us to have the people doing the job to make more of the decisions."

"When a job comes in, it's assigned to a crew and that crew decides how the job will be done. This again makes people feel part of the team. It also allows young airmen, who are sometimes not involved in the decision-making process, to get involved and see how decisions are made, not just told the results."

"The effectiveness of a cohesive goal-focused team is a powerful self-motivating force," said Young. "It is apparent in the achievements, attitude and wing support provided by the armament systems flight."